

MINUTES
Virginia Board of Education
Committee on School and Division Accountability
June 26, 2013
2:55 P.M.
Jefferson Conference Room, James Monroe Building

Welcome and Opening Comments

Mrs. Diane Atkinson, chairman of the Committee on School and Division Accountability, convened the meeting with the following Board members present: Dr. Oktay Baysal, Betsy Beamer, Christian Braunlich, Dr. Billy Cannaday, Jr., Darla Edwards, David Foster, Winsome Sears, and Joan Wodiska. Dr. Patricia Wright, superintendent of public instruction, was also present.

Mrs. Atkinson welcomed the Board members and guests to the committee meeting. She stated that they were there today to discuss several important issues that will be before the Board of Education in the coming months. First are growth indicators for use in the *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia* (Standards of Accreditation or SOA), teacher evaluation, and a school grading system and then, second, revisions to the SOA. Regarding the growth indicators, the 2013 General Assembly (Chapter 672 of the Acts of the Assembly) requires the Board to approve by July 31, 2013, student growth indicators for use in the SOA as well as in teacher evaluations. It also requires the Board, by October 1, 2014, to report individual school performance based on an A-F grading system that must include student growth indicators in addition to accreditation and state and federal accountability requirements. By October 1, 2014, the Board must make both the grading system and individual school grades available to the public.

She went on to say the legislation also provides a definition of student growth for the purposes of assigning grades to individual schools. At last month's meeting the focus was on regulatory revisions. Now the committee is ready to begin to lay the foundation for the A-F grading discussion. As a precursor to the discussion, the Board needs to settle on what it will use as indicators for growth. The Board is first required to adopt approved indicators for student growth for use in the SOA and teacher evaluation.

As to the SOA, Mrs. Atkinson said the BOE approved emergency amendments in June 2012 in response to legislation which strengthened post-secondary education and work-place readiness opportunities for students and consolidated the number of Board of Education approved diplomas. These regulations became effective June 5, 2013. Mrs. Atkinson noted that at tomorrow's business meeting, Anne Wescott will present permanent regulations that will take the place of the emergency regulations which will expire in 2014. The permanent regulations are exactly the same as the emergency regulations. So that delay of the permanent regulations can be avoided, the Board has decided to separate out the comprehensive review of the SOA. At tomorrow's business meeting, Mrs. Wescott will present the Board a Notice of Intended Regulatory Action

(NOIRA) for the comprehensive review of the SOA which will allow the Board more time to engage stakeholders and to discuss comprehensive changes to the SOA without delaying the permanent regulations.

Mrs. Atkinson noted that today the Board will discuss some of the areas of focus for the comprehensive review and hear from additional stakeholders as to their suggestions for changes for the SOA. Because no one had signed up for public comment, she moved on to the organizations scheduled to present at the meeting.

The first presenter was Jim Gallagher, president of the [Virginia Council of Administrators for Special Education \(VCASE\)](#). He stated that VCASE believes the following actions are changes needed to close the achievement gap:

- Enhance the focus on early intervention targeting reading skills so that the goal that all students are able to read by Grade 3 is reachable
- Digress from one-time, multiple choice testing
- Reinstate the Virginia Modified Achievement Standards Test (VMASST)

He also indicated that VCASE supports the following Virginia Association of School Superintendents (VASS) positions: indicators that focus solely on Standards of Learning growth are too narrow to comprehensively assess student performance, particularly for students with disabilities; the option for expedited retakes should be made available to all students; the Standards of Quality (SOQ) should be revised to reflect state support for all mandated programs; and the SOQ staffing ratios should be adjusted.

The next presenter was Meg Gruber who spoke on behalf of the [Virginia Education Association \(VEA\)](#). She stated that VEA members feel strongly that there is a need to look at targeted class size reduction to ensure that students are in an appropriate class size for learning. She also indicated that there is a need to look at increasing student and parental accountability, as well as a need to look at adequate funding. Moreover, she said there is much concern about measuring growth. She said student growth indicators are best done locally with input from teachers because one size does not fit all and growth indicators should be determined by the classroom teacher, administrators, and school board members who can best determine what a community needs in measuring growth. In addition, student growth should be in some way linked to student attendance. She also discussed the need for changes in the SOA, specifically related to teacher load, class size, duty-free lunch, and unencumbered planning time, as current requirements are outdated. Finally, she stated that the minimal technology standards for hardware and software must be updated to provide access to technology to all students in Virginia.

Anne Carson, president, presented on behalf of the [Virginia PTA](#). She introduced fellow PTA members Brenda Sheridan, president-elect; Sarah Gross, legislation and education chair; and Jane Brooks, president-elect to be. Ms. Carson stated that they understand the need for assessing schools, teachers, and students and eagerly await those assessments as they can form an accurate picture of their students when the report card comes and they see multiple grades and multiple scores. She said parents

are looking to the Board to ensure that they have as much data as possible and as varied as possible to make informed decisions. She said parents understand that schools are going to test students, but parents want the results of these tests to yield meaningful instruction, not more tests. She then presented the Board with the PTA's National Standards for Family-School Partnerships and noted that when parents are involved in their children's learning both at home and at school, their children do better in school.

The last presentation came from Karen Wilson, president-elect of the [Virginia School Boards Association \(VSBA\)](#). She acknowledged the challenges the Board faces in developing appropriate student growth measures by July 31 of this year. She suggested that the Board approach this process slowly and adopt interim student growth indicators that can be field tested to insure validity. In addition, she requested that the Board consider revisiting the "seat time" requirements in the current standards as this requirement appears to be inconsistent with online instruction. Replacing such requirements with a competency standard may be in order for students receiving online instruction. She also said it may be time to review and possibly revise the limitations on class periods in the standards as current practices in many school divisions have overtaken these restrictions. A Board member asked if Ms. Wilson could describe for them the types of Board regulations that might be restricting what they are trying to accomplish through innovation. Ms. Wilson said she could poll her members. Dr. Wright also asked if she could obtain feedback from VASS and VSBA regarding these issues.

(Click on each organization's highlighted title above to review its presentation.)

Next Shelley Loving-Ryder, assistant superintendent for the division of student assessment and school improvement, presented an overview of [Proposed Growth Indicators in Response to the 2013 Acts of Assembly](#). She stated that today the Board will review the list of proposed student growth indicators that the Board will receive for first review at tomorrow's Board meeting. She stated that the legislation passed during the 2013 General Assembly Session provides a definition of "student growth" for purposes of assigning grades as follows: "As used in this act, for purposes of assigning grades, "student growth" means (i) whether individual students on average fall below, meet, or exceed an expected amount of growth based on a statewide average or reference base year on state assessments or additional assessments approved by the Board; (ii) maintaining a proficient or advanced proficient performance level on state assessments; or (iii) making significant improvement within the below basic or basic level of performance on reading or mathematics assessments as determined by the Board." (2013 Acts of Assembly Chapter 672 – HB 1999/SB 1207)

Because the definition includes the term "additional assessments approved by the Board," the document that lists the growth indicators also includes proposed criteria for approving these additional assessments. In addition, there are proposed elementary and middle school indicators. However, at the high school level, students are not required to take annual state assessments in reading and mathematics. Instead, these

students are required to meet college and career readiness indicators at different times during their high school career. One Board member asked about absenteeism and how it falls within the indicators. Although that issue does not fall within the growth indicators, Dr. Wright said it could be discussed with other data elements the Board wants to introduce during later discussion in October. Mrs. Loving-Ryder reviewed all of the indicators. One of the Board members questioned only measuring the “percent of graduates” in the indicators. Dr. Wright responded that some of the indicators will be used to certify that the individual student has grown. Others will be used to determine what weight the indicator should have in deciding the overall grade. The Board member indicated a concern about the students who do not graduate and what their growth is. He said they should have a measure to look at the students who are not doing well. Another Board member concurred and said all students should be a part of an evaluation system. There was much discussion about this issue.

Mrs. Loving-Ryder concluded her presentation by discussing the use of growth indicators in teacher evaluation. She said the last section of the document deals with teacher evaluation because the legislation does address the use of the indicators in that process.

Anne Wescott, assistant superintendent for policy and communications, was the final presenter. She discussed a [Presentation on Areas of Focus for the Comprehensive Review of the Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia](#) and those issues the Board might want to consider as it does a comprehensive review of the SOA regulations, including closing the achievement gap; student achievement expectations; diploma requirements; transfer students and credits; elementary, middle, and high schools; standard and verified units of credits; school and instructional leadership; staffing requirements; school facilities and safety; communications with parents; school accreditation; the graduation and completion index; and accreditation ratings. Following her presentation, there was some discussion of these issues. (Mrs. Wescott also included in her materials, for informational purposes, a [Crosswalk: Standards of Accreditation to Code of Virginia](#).)

The meeting adjourned at 4:50 p.m.